

FROM: PUS
15 OCTOBER 1993

Copy no of [9]

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PS/SECRETARY OF STATE(L)
MR STEPHENS [1]

JDI: MINISTERIAL BRIEFING

Sir Robin Butler and I saw the Secretary of State for Defence, the Home Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer late yesterday afternoon following the Prime Minister's meeting earlier. I shall be briefing the Attorney-General this evening (15 October).

2. Copies of the JDI with the revised paragraph 4 were left with the Home Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the footing that they would be safeguarded very tightly. The Defence Secretary chose not to retain a copy for the present. We shall arrange to have copies available at the Prime Minister's resumed meeting with the wider group of Ministers on Monday 18 October.

3. The Secretary of State may like to know the initial reaction of his three colleagues:

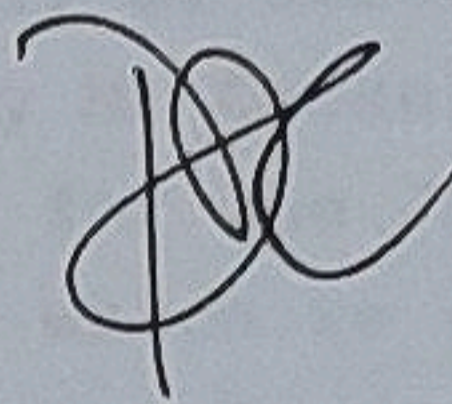
- (i) the Defence Secretary (who had not, of course, been briefed earlier on CHIFFON and to whom the subject came completely new) was entirely supportive. He understood at once the purpose and nature of the JDI exercise, agreed that an explicit reference to the constitutional guarantee was the crux, and that much depended on Mr Molyneaux's assessment of its likely impact on the Protestant community;
- (ii) the Home Secretary took a much more reserved position. Assuming that there was the explicit reference to the constitutional guarantee and that Jim Molyneaux was not too hostile, he said he could understand the arguments though he would wish to

consider his own view of how the balance came out. He said he was much more concerned about what would follow the making of the JD even with peace established. He foresaw great difficulty in any dialogue with Sinn Fein, and particularly on anything touching the boys behind the wire, the boys on the run etc. If Sinn Fein had entered the normal democratic political process, surely it was for PIRA simply to surrender (in the sense both of surrendering to the law, and giving up the arms). Sir Robin Butler had left by this point and I offered the Home Secretary the best assessment I could make of what would follow the successful delivery of the JDI. I said the initial political dialogue for was for the Irish Government and other Irish parties, including Northern Ireland parties, in the convention. Some time would have to elapse before HMG, let alone the Unionists, could be expected to sit down in political dialogue with Sinn Fein. It was a virtue of the JDI concept that it enabled Sinn Fein to engage very quickly in the democratic political process but in a way that did not involve HMG or the Unionists. The downside of that was the apparent creation of a pan-nationalist front including Sinn Fein, but with peace established that ought to be wearable. On the other side, there were absolutely no commitments - and by definition there could be no developed plans or understandings with PIRA - about the politico-military agenda to which the Home Secretary had referred. Once peace, as our first objective, was secured there would remain as an important long-term objective the eradication of the means of any revived Republican terrorist campaign - and that meant ultimately the recovery of the weapons and explosives stocks, mainly in the South. For the Republicans they would have as a long-term objective improving the position of the boys behind the wire and the boys on the run (or at risk of prosecution). I said there was no understanding or any necessary connection between the two but that was the long-term picture. For the short-run, there needed to be a process of de-escalation with Northern Ireland between the Provisionals and the security forces to which both the RUC, the Army and ourselves had given high level attention but which in the nature of things could not be reduced to a police/military contingency plan at any rate at this stage. The Home Secretary said he would reflect on all this;

- (iii) Sir Robin Butler and I then called on the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He shared the view of his colleagues regarding the crucial nature of the constitutional guarantee reference, and the importance to be attached to Jim Molyneaux's assessment of the JDI. That said, his political judgement was that this was an altogether more viable and appealing initiative than the matter he had heard about some months ago.

SECRET AND PERSONAL

He was very supportive and will I judge continue to be so when it comes to the Prime Minister's next meeting. He too speculated about events after the successful delivery of the JDI, accepted the inevitability of splinter groups and provocative acts the likelihood of PIRA disciplining its own dissidents, and the longer term address to issues like the prisoner population and the arms dumps. He did not think they were matters which could be addressed as part of the initial decision. He did not seek to apply a Treasury Minister's eye to the issue (peace, dividend etc) but was exercising a broad political judgement in very much the same way as the Prime Minister had been doing.



J A CHILCOT

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SECRET AND PERSONAL

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